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# IMPROVING DISTANCE EDUCATION FOR ADULT LEARNERS

Fact Sheet  
**73**

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## ***What is Project IDEAL?***

Project IDEAL (Improving Distance Education for Adult Learners) is a consortium of states working together to examine the potential of distance learning to increase access to education and learning and to systematically examine effective distance learning practices. The project is funded by the participating states and a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Adult education programs were selected to participate through a competitive grant process.

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## ***What is the vision of Project IDEAL?***

Through collaborative research and practice, the Project IDEAL consortium is working to provide quality distance education for adult learners across the country. Research-based practice helps ensure that strong programs are developed and teaching models are tailored to the strengths and limitations of distance learning delivery systems.

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## ***What are the goals of Maryland's IDEAL distance learning pilot project?***

Maryland's Project IDEAL distance learning pilot project will provide online GED Preparation classes to Maryland adults. The goal of the pilot project is to help adult learners prepare to take the GED Tests and earn a Maryland High School Diploma by Examination.

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## ***What is Maryland's need for Adult Education services?***

There is a significant need for Adult Education services in Maryland. According to the 2000 Census, over 613,000 Maryland adults, age 18 and above, do not have a high school diploma. When out-of-school youth between the ages of 16 and 18 are included along with the recent immigrant population in need of English as a Second Language, the estimate rises to 959,000 people.

Classroom-based adult education programs are able to serve only three to four percent of these individuals.

Distance learning offers an option to adults who want to take advantage of the GED process, but who may not, for whatever reason, be able to take part in traditional classroom instruction. It also provides an alternative for learners who don't do well with traditional classroom instruction.

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***What services do participating states receive?***

The Project IDEAL Support Center at the University of Michigan provides materials, training, and technical support to the states participating in the consortium. The Center assists states in the design of their research, provides tools to collect and organize learner data, analyzes the data, and conducts an annual workshop to help the states interpret the findings, prepare a distance learning report, and share best practices.

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***Which states are members of the consortium?***

The consortium is composed of 16 member states that are working to provide quality distance education to adult learners. Current member states are Arizona, Arkansas, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Washington, and West Virginia.

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***Who should I contact for more information about Project IDEAL and Maryland's adult education distance learning pilot project?***

For additional information, contact the Adult Education and Literacy Services Branch, Division of Career Technology and Adult Learning, Maryland State Department of Education, at 410-767-0162.